

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Tenmile South Helena Forest Restoration Committee, the City of Helena, stakeholders, resources, and media  
**From:** Sarah Elkins, City of Helena Point-of-Contact  
**Date:** June 22, 2017  
**Re:** Meeting notes for Wednesday, **June 14, 2017** Collaborative meeting from 1:30pm-3:30pm in room 426 of the City-County Building

### Attendance

Collaborative Committee Members – Chairman Joe Cohenour, conservation organization representative, Co-Vice Chair Jordan Alexander, fire community representative, Co-Vice Chair Mike Bishop, citizen at-large representative, Brad Langsather, City of Helena representative (for Ron Alles), Doug Powell, citizen at-large, Angie Grove, Recreational Users Representative  
Resources – Tom Cleasby (USGS), Chris Ellison (USGS), Sarah Elkins (City of Helena)

### **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:30PM**

### REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes requested or suggested.

### HEAR THE PUBLIC

No comments.

### REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

- TSHC re-authorization – Meeting to discuss this Friday, 6/16 from 11am – 12pm in room 326 of the city-county building

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Helena/Lewis and Clark Forest Plan – No update, Heather had a conflict on her schedule.
  - Discussion about recreation trail proposal and the resulting extensive public comment.  
Links to the proposal and the public comments:
    - [http://a123.g.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/100262\\_FSPLT3\\_3987120.pdf](http://a123.g.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/100262_FSPLT3_3987120.pdf)
    - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45725>
- City Update, Brad Langsather:

3 crews are working around the top of Mt Helena on the southeast face and on the north face near the 1906 trail from east to west. Another crew is working on mitigation on the north face of Mt Ascension. That's a 3 year project, and they expect to complete around 40 acres this year.

The city is also working through the 360 grant and moving up through Grizzly Gulch. All of the work there is hand crews cutting and piling smaller fuels, then followed by an excavator to pile the larger fuels in the heavy jackstrawed areas. The crew hasn't gotten to the Scott Reservoir yet, and they have around 190 acres left in that area.

The city, county, and FS are collaborating to install a vaulted restroom at the trailhead for the Ridge Trail. The county will build the parking area with a horseshoe turnaround. Bigger vehicles like school buses, road graders, trucks with horse trailers, and the trail rider bus will be able to

turn around more easily. The city will maintain the toilets and trailhead because they already have staff checking the Dump Gulch trail nearby. The FS is engineering/designing the horseshoe and parking areas, and the city is installing the toilets. The vaulted toilet is being funded through a Missouri River Resource Area Council (RAC) grant.

Most of the fuels being cleared are being chipped and piled, and sometimes those chips are being used to cover disturbed soil, making weed treatment more effective. It's very difficult to address weeds in the jack-strawed areas.

There was some discussion about chipping, if it's too thick, germinated seeds struggle to come through, but there is usually a lot of moisture under the top couple of layers, leaving little fuel for wildfire.

Doug asked about how the smaller trees were being thinned on Mt. Ascension, asked if the spacing must be so wide. Brad said they are being disk cut and left to break-down. A broadcast burn is highly unlikely because of the proximity to so many homes.

Brad and Jordan mentioned that the Jim Town burn went really well, and that there was a lot of preparation that went into it to make it successful and lower risk surrounding a burn like that.

Brad was asked about the status of the FS/City landswap proposed. Discussions have stalled a bit, but they are still planning to move forward. The city will acquire Chessman Reservoir (the history is muddled), and the FS will acquire properties adjacent to other FS properties that make sense. The City will also extend the buffer area near the flume beyond the current 10-11 feet of access. There was some discussion about expanding the capacity of Chessman & Scott, there was some memory of discussions from many years ago. Brad said it is generally the flume itself that limits capacity, not the reservoirs or treatment plant. No need to expand capacity at this time because of our additional capacity through the Missouri River plant.

- USGS Update, Tom Cleasby

EPA has 70 more mine sites to clean up; the USGS selected some mines in good positions to monitor water quality over time. The FWP also monitors the water quality in terms of organisms in it. USGS doesn't use the data for programs, they collect and disseminate it for other organizations such as the FWP, DNRC, FS, etc. The difficulty in analysis and making assumptions based on the data is that due to funding limitations, they collect just twice annually, with an attempt to hit the peak of high and low flows during the year.

They look specifically at the correlation among water quality, sediment, and turbidity.

Brad was asked where the city does sampling, and he said he believes only above the treatment plant and potentially at the headgates and reservoirs. There was some discussion about the impact on discharges between high and low flows. With low flows it's mostly groundwater, often with higher concentrations and lower loads. With high flows, it's general lower concentrations with higher loads and more sediment.

It was suggested that the collaborative request an annual presentation from Tom at USGS.

Contact information for our guests: Tom Cleasby, 406-457-5919, [tleasby@usgs.gov](mailto:tleasby@usgs.gov) and Chris Ellison, 406-457-5901, [cellison@usgs.gov](mailto:cellison@usgs.gov)

**FUTURE MEETING DATES AND AGENDA ITEMS:**

Field trip ideas: See areas where treatment occurred in the past 5-8 years, and places where there was no treatment prior to a wildfire (possibly Mann Gulch/Meriwether)

See area where an excavator was used to pile larger fuels and chipping occurred.

Locations:

- City properties with chipping and chip distribution
- Telegraph Trail
- Flume
- Capital 360 project areas
- Mann Gulch/Meriwether
- Prescribed fire area on Grizzly Gulch (again, 2 years after our last visit)

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 4:00PM**